

**Special Services Advisory Committee Meeting  
Waukesha County DHHS – Brookfield Room  
April 23, 2009**

**Members Present:** Trisha Nepper, Ann Shurte, Bonnie Siegel, Deb DeMaster, Sheryl Gerstl, Teri O'Grady, Mary Jo Foye, Jesus Mireles, Eve Altizer, Sharon Fliess, Patrick Jauquet, Pam Kliner, Nichole Hunkins, Kate Wallenslager, Julie Turkoske, Dennis Farrell, Mary Ann Jensen, Don Daniels, Lora J. Sullivan, Kathy Evans

**Members Absent:** Lorie Johnston, Barbara Fredricks, Mary Beth Jezo-Sywoulka, Missy Kueht-Becker, Stephanie Mauck, Sherry Perez, Ken and Julie Perkins and Cheri Sylla

Meeting began at 1:00 p.m.

**Agenda item #1: Introductions**

Committee members introduced themselves and stated whether they were parents or from an agency. Much to the delight of the group, there were five new members in attendance at this meeting!

**Agenda Item #2: Approval of Minutes.**

The group reviewed committee meeting minutes from January 15, 2009. Teri motioned to accept the meeting minutes as written. Mary Jo seconded the motion. Minutes approved.

The group reviewed committee meeting minutes from the October 23, 2008. Nichole motioned to accept the meeting minutes as written. Sharon seconded the motion. Minutes approved.

**Agenda Item #3: Approval of the 2009 FSP plan:**

The 2009 Annual Plan Update Form and an addendum list of proposed changes were passed out for review. Don Daniels summarized some of the major changes, including:

- Streamlining the referral process so that an application for the FSP program is a simultaneous application for the CLTS Waiver and vice versa. Children with an autism spectrum disorder are automatically eligible for FSP.
- Challenging ourselves to bring the thinking for these two programs into closer alignment with one another. While FSP funding is more flexible than waiver funding, the State has tightened restrictions related to FSP to narrow the difference between the two programs. An example is that a family now has to go through the MA denial process before FSP funds can be made available to them. Another difference is in relation to the concept of "experimental treatments". The state is now requiring an "independent, peer-reviewed research" to prove the efficacy of proposed treatment for a specific diagnosis before we can approve it in either program.
- Merging the files and service coordinators across program lines, for more efficient use of resources.
- Using FSP as "local match" to the waiver for 10 kids in 2009. This means that we can serve that family with only 40% of the funds coming from the FSP budget and 60% coming from the state/federal dollars. Waiver dollars can be used to stretch the FSP budget.
- Altering the manner in which the FSP questionnaire is scored compared to the past. The County continues to build is a rotation of funding ("adjusted score") by giving extra points to families that have not received funding in recent years. A "raw score" determines how much money the family will receive when they do come up for funding. By making this change,

the County is attempting to serve more children at a lower amount (based on need) rather than serving fewer children who automatically get a higher amount.

- Including interested FSP parents in an information/resource sharing email list that Don maintains.

A number of related items were discussed, as well. Julie asked that there be some explanation for newer members on the committee about the basics of FSP and Waiver funding. Ann stated that teachers could disperse information to families if they had a better understanding of the differences between the programs and which goods/services could be covered by both. In the past, they were afraid to give information because it may have been wrong. She feels more comfortable giving out FSP information since she has been on the committee. Jesse suggested we incorporate an explanation of how we manage FSP into a future agenda. Items that might need explanation include how plans are based on needs/outcomes, waiting lists, the types of things that can be funded and general program guidelines.

Patrick inquired about the parental fee letter. He wondered if the parental fee affected him since he was not receiving funding. He also wondered if his income made a difference in the score on the questionnaire, or if there was an income level at which the parental fee made the receipt of FSP funds moot. Don explained that everyone is eligible regardless of income. Trisha pointed out that the maximum parental payment, regardless of income, was 41% of the value of goods and services received. Jesse explained that the parental payment change, as with most other changes affecting these programs, was state-directed with limited input from the counties.

Sheryl asked how the merging of the two programs affects kids in foster care. Foster care is an allowable waiver setting, but is not for FSP.

Jesus mentioned that we do keep some money aside for crisis or emergency funding. Kathy E. doubted that families are aware of this and suggested that they be better informed about crisis funds. Julie suggested that families need to develop a relationship with their case manager, but questioned the wisdom of making the existence of those funds common knowledge, fearing that knowledge could exhaust the funds for their intended use. Don pointed out that crisis dollars are very few. Jesus said in the past a family could call and the case manager would talk to their supervisor and see about extra funding somewhere else in the department. Julie concluded that much of this issue is one of trust, with families needing to know that if they have a crisis or need that they could seek crisis funding from the program.

Dennis reminded the group that past FSP meetings were educational and included speakers who came to the meetings to give information to parents. Don would be willing to have a group parent meeting to educate the families about FSP and waiver funding. Julie volunteered to help with this meeting.

Jesus stated he is trying to get additional staff to do the work necessary to better facilitate implementation of these ideas and to provide better support families.

Following this lengthy discussion, Patrick motioned that we approve the FSP plan as written. Dennis seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and all members voted in favor.

#### **Agenda Item #4: Client satisfaction survey.**

Julie asked if we could table this item one more time, since there was limited time to discuss it at this meeting. All parties agreed that it would be put on the next meeting agenda.

**Agenda Item #5: Update on CLTS Waivers/combining CLTS waivers with FSP...**

Because of time limitations, this item was carried over to the next meeting.

**Agenda Item #6. Fraudulent use of money.**

Don gave a number of examples of fraud being alleged. Those examples involved FSP, the waiver and UCP funding. So far, all of these allegations have involved people employed through MCFI (Milwaukee Center for Independence), our fiscal agent. The question for the committee was how to respond.

In a case where a parent admitted misuse of the funds, the decision was made to drop the individual from the program. Dennis asked if we would contact the police. Don replied that we have to turn it over to the MA fraud unit if it involved Medicaid, as we have a MA fraud person in our department. FSP and UCP funds do not involve Medicaid. Because the cost of prosecuting such abuse can be prohibitive and there is no budget for that, we have not gone in that direction to date. Dennis asked whether we could use corporation counsel for that purpose. Julie stated the concern that the general public may think that there was rampant misuse of these funds if publicity of this misuse occurs.

Jesus said abuse of the system affects all of us. He hopes the letter he sent previously helps minimize the problems with this issue. What is our responsibility? Should we terminate people from the program if they misuse it and we find out about it? Kathy E. thought the letter was very good. Deb D. said it is sad that other people will not say who misused the funds. Julie thinks some families may think they are just "maximizing their money." Some people might not understand what the rules are and that misusing the funds is illegal. This also hurts other families. Currently there is no counseling that can be given so people understand that it is illegal. Jesus said we are going to investigate it and follow it up. The parent will be terminated from whatever program they use fraudulently. The family could still access other programs but not the one they misused.

Julie asked if there is a county or state policy on this issue. Don said he asked a number of other counties and could not find an organized response. Nichole suggested adding a statement about fraudulent use of these funds, and having parents sign it in their initial intake process. Nichole is also putting a statement on the invoice/time sheet to say that if a family abuses the funds, they could be prosecuted. Kathy E. suggested that crisis money should be used to help these families. Mary Jo said that if that parent had been connected to another program, maybe they would not have misused the funds. A suggestion was made to send a 211 resource list to the families with our questionnaire and include information on fraud at the same time.

**Agenda Item #7: Birth-to-Three Update**

Jesus Mireles provided the Birth-to-Three program update. There is stimulus money for Birth-to-Three but its use is still in the planning stages. Waukesha County could receive additional funds to go to families. There is also consideration being given to developing another waiver specific to B-3, with funding that is limited to the child's third birthday. The B-3 program statewide is under-funded. If a family is on waiver, they could get 60% from the federal money and the county would pay 40%. We will know more in the future about how these funds would be distributed. The "good news" is that we were not over budget in 2008 whereas historically the program had been.

Families are encouraged to use other resources to maximize the funding. In recent years, the number of children in B-3 increased from 300 to 900 while our funding did not increase proportionately. We got additional funding in 2005 and we are now seeing fewer children in the

program. This year, approximately 470 families are being served at any point in time. 60% of the kids graduate out of birth to three early (per Kate).

Julie asked that we have some visual aids explaining the waiver programs at the next meeting. Many people would understand the programs better if given the assistance of a visual image.

**Agenda Item #8: Discussion about new chairperson.**

Julie stated she does not want to leave the committee but her child is soon to become an adult. She asked that others consider whether they would be willing to be the new co-chair, along with Don. DHHS does the agenda and has the minutes sent out. The amount of work required by the co-chair is relatively small. Jesus and Don have been supportive of this committee.

Julie talked with Teri about being the next co-chair. She has lots of experience, great leadership skills and is a mother of a 15 year old. Others were encouraged to consider their interest/willingness to serve in that capacity. The July meeting will include this as an agenda item, with the hope that a decision regarding a new co-chairperson can be made. Julie will email the link to the FSP information and the committee booklet. This committee is advisory to the department so the chairperson is not supposed to be a staff person. Julie will bring copies of the *Make a Difference for Children with Disabilities* booklet to the next meeting. This serves as a guide to serving on a county Family Support Program Advisory Committee. The link to the online version is <http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/wrc/pdf/pubs/MakeADiff.pdf>.

Julie noted that the public hearing for the county budget is tonight, at the Expo center, 7:00 pm in the center arena. Parents can still write a letter about unmet needs if they cannot attend. The letters can be sent to Antwayne Robinson by the 27<sup>th</sup> of this month. Julie will bring her child to the meeting. Dennis encouraged parents to bring their children.

Jesus passed around a copy of the organizational chart showing where the Special Services Advisory Committee fits in the system. Some parents feel they need more information about how the funding for the Family Support Program works.

Ann made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Julie seconded. Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Trisha Nepper, CSW  
Children with Special Needs Unit